

The following Letter to the Editor ran in the Waxahachie Daily Light on October 6, 2006.

‘Responding to letters’

To the Editor:

Congressman Joe Barton’s guiding principle for autism research is simple: Politics out, money in. And most autism advocates agree. Here’s what the National Autism Association, the Organization for Autism Research and 10 other autism organizations say about the Barton bill to reorganize the National Institutes of Health:

“We write to offer our enthusiastic support and profound gratitude for your proposed ‘National Institutes of Health Reform Act of 2006.’ ...We respect the work of many fine public servants at the NIH and do not believe that the record of the NIH on autism is a result of malevolence. We believe, instead, that your bill is right on target in identifying and seeking to redress structural flaws in the bureaucratic arrangement and functioning of the NIH which produce poor results on autism.

“In particular, empowering the director of the NIH and creating a common fund to promote trans-NIH research activities are absolutely essential reforms for the agency to be effective with respect to autism and the many other ailments which cannot and should not be locked within the ‘silo’ of any particular component institute of the NIH. Likewise, agency-wide reporting, a process for ‘scientific management review’ and a new emphasis on ‘high risk, high reward’ research will all benefit the autism community and all Americans. Once again, we commend you for your effort to maximize the impact of the NIH on the health of America.”

Joe Barton’s NIH Reform Act increases NIH’s budget \$1.4 billion next year to \$29.7 billion. It will go to \$31.2 billion in 2008 and \$32.7 billion in 2009. This is money that will spur medical innovation aimed at curing autism and dozens of other diseases, some of them killers. The bill passed his committee 42-1 and the House, 414-2, and it will pass the Senate if we keep working.

Separately, the congressman enthusiastically supports increasing and intensifying autism-related activities at the Centers for Disease Control, including autism surveillance, education and outreach. The Barton proposal includes \$225 million to educate doctors and parents about the warning signs of autism and will increase and intensify important autism surveillance and monitoring activities at the CDC.

Some don’t like that approach. They say we need congressmen instead of scientists deciding who gets money for research, and who doesn’t. Well, we think pork-barrel politics won’t cure autism, scientists will, and Joe Barton is going to make sure they get both the money and the ability to decide how to do their own research.

Karen Modlin

press secretary

Office of U.S. Rep. Joe Barton